



University of
Connecticut

Testimony

by

Robert McCarthy

Vice-Provost for Public Engagement &

Dean, School of Pharmacy

Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Public Hearing

September 25, 2012

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee, I am Robert McCarthy the Vice-Provost for Public Engagement and Dean of the School of Pharmacy at the University of Connecticut.

We are grateful to the Committee for studying public higher education's role in assisting Connecticut's urban communities. I am pleased to share with you today both the depth of our institutional commitment to outreach and engagement, and highlight some additional activities at UConn which reflect the ways in which our faculty, students and staff are working to improve our state's high-poverty cities.

UConn's Outreach and Public Engagement Infrastructure

In the past decade, UConn has greatly enhanced its outreach and public engagement infrastructure. A Public Engagement Forum was created in 2003 with membership drawn from a dedicated pool of faculty, staff, administration, and community partners. Key offices represented on the Forum are the Office of Community Outreach (coordinating student experiences), the Office of Service-Learning (supporting the pedagogy of service-learning curricula), and the Office of Institutional Research (overseeing data systems and reporting). Many of the members of the Forum have community engagement responsibilities within their own school/college or other unit.

Then, in 2010, the University created the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) to provide focus and structure to our outreach efforts, and I was asked to head the Office as its Executive Director. OPE fosters engagement across the University community, thereby extending the transformational impact the University has throughout the state. It also plays a critical role in assisting the University in achieving its outreach mission and implementing the engagement portions of our most recent Academic Plan. The Office has compiled a listing of programs by topic and region that allows external organizations to locate the University resource you are interested in quickly and easily. For University faculty and professional staff, OPE has compiled extensive background information on engaged scholarship, specifically, what it is and how faculty can enhance your teaching and research through engaged activities, including experiential learning and community-based research. It is our hope that the OPE will link people and organizations with similar interests to help solve some of the most pressing concerns our society faces. Earlier this year, in attempt to further imbed engagement efforts into the University's organizational structure, the Provost appointed me as our first Vice-Provost of Public Engagement.

UConn's efforts in public engagement activities have received national attention. Last year, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recognized UConn as one of 115 institutions to earn the organization's prestigious "Community Engagement" classification. Since this system was created in 2006, only 10 percent of the nation's colleges and universities have received this designation. Also in 2011, UConn was invited to join TRUCEN, The Research University Civic Engagement Network, a prestigious network of about 35 universities. TRUCEN works to advance civic engagement and engaged scholarship among research universities and create resources and models for use across higher education.

More Specifics on UConn's Work in Urban Areas

I would now like to share some specific examples that are indicative of the types of efforts underway at the University.

Our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences provides a wide-range of services including the Governor's Urban Youth Violence Program, and a Reading Service Learning Program that has assisted 1200 children in Stamford and Norwalk who are at risk for reading difficulties. The UConn School of Medicine and our Health Center faculty, students, and staff also contribute thousands of hours of service to urban areas, including free medical services to Hartford's most vulnerable citizens at the South Park Inn Medical Clinic, the South Marshall Street Homeless Shelter, and the YMCA Adolescent Girls Medical Center. Dr. Carol Polifroni from the School of Nursing works with Hartford youth, funded by the HRSA Nursing Workforce Diversity (NWD) in a program called "RUN with LC." This innovative program is currently being implemented with 200 underrepresented, high poverty middle school students to increase diversity in the nursing workforce and encourage Hartford children to enter nursing as a career. Many of our undergraduate and graduate students work as volunteers and conduct their internships in urban settings. Last year, for example, 51 students in our School of Social Work contributed 28,560 hours in urban internships in public schools, hospitals, social service agencies and nursing homes and students in Public Policy at the Greater Hartford Campus made a similar commitment to urban placements.

The School of Pharmacy

As the Dean of the School of Pharmacy, I know first-hand the many resources our School devoted to improving urban communities through a variety of key programs. Here are some examples:

Urban Service Track (UST) Program: The Urban Service Track is an enrichment program of the Schools of Dental Medicine, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy and Social Work. Urban Service Track Scholars are interested in working in urban, underserved communities following graduation and complete additional outreach activities, such as providing health care services to uninsured individuals in urban homeless shelters and soup kitchens, in addition to the required coursework in their respective schools.

Health Disparities Activities in Urban Settings: School of Pharmacy students are actively involved in a diverse and evolving mix of projects focused on improving the care of people who have challenges obtaining health care. Our students learn to narrow the gap between health care need and availability. Our students are regular volunteers at the Covenant Soup Kitchen (Willimantic), Hope Dispensary (Bridgeport), and South Park Inn (Hartford). We also participate annually in Primary Care Week with the other UConn health profession schools which focuses on addressing health disparities so prominent in urban settings.

Faculty Activities in Urban Settings: School of Pharmacy faculty member Thomas Buckley received a Provost's Award for Public Engagement for his work with the Cambodian population in West Hartford. Faculty member Marie Smith in Collaboration with Margherita Giuliano of the Connecticut Pharmacists Association and Michael Starkowski of the Department of Social Services recently received an the APhA foundation Pinnacle Award for their long standing collaborative work documenting the value of a pharmacist in a patient's medical home; their work is especially important for underserved patients in urban settings.

I hope this information, and what we have submitted to the Committee, has been helpful. I would be happy to answer any questions.

On behalf of the University, I too would like to thank the Committee and the General Assembly for its tremendous support of UConn. Our successes are a direct result of that support and we look forward to working with you on this study and other issues in the future.



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